A Report on

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES:

THE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Province of
British Columbia

Ministry of
Advanced Education
and Job Training
"SKILLS FOR LIFE"

Parliament Buildings
Victoria
British Columbia
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To Whom This May Concern:

I am pleased to provide you with a copy of Mr. Bob Bucher's report on this Ministry's Vocational Rehabilitation Service (V.R.S.). The report, commissioned by the Ministry, examines the current V.R.S. structure and makes recommendations on the future delivery of the service. The Ministry has carefully reviewed the report and provided comments on Mr. Bucher's recommendations with notes to indicate where action has already taken place.

A major component of Mr. Bucher's report is an enhanced role for community based organizations and agencies involved in the delivery of programs through V.R.S. In order to fully explore these recommendations and others made in the report, regional consultations with interested organizations will be scheduled over the next two months.

Staff from the Ministry's regional offices will be contacting organizations shortly to advise them of the specific time, location and agenda for these consultation meetings, and to invite their participation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your interest in our Vocational Rehabilitation Services program. I hope to see you at the consultation meetings.

Yours sincerely,

J. Ganong.

Joyce E. Ganong
Assistant Deputy Minister
Job Training, Apprenticeship
and Labour Market Policy

90-01282/

ADDENDUM TO

"VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES: THE DELIVERY SYSTEM"

BUCHER RECOMMENDATIONS	**MINISTRY COMMENTS**
A. Mandate and Objectives (Recommendations 1 and 2)	
1. The Ministry officials at the most senior levels confirm and reinforce the appropriateness and stability of the V.R.S. program as part of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, Job Training Branch.	The Ministry concurs with Mr. Bucher's recommendation that the Vocational Rehabilitation Service (V.R.S.) is appropriately placed in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training and, more specifically, within the Job Training Branch. In recognition of the importance of the mandate of job training, the Ministry, in January, 1989, established a separate Division with its own Assistant Deputy Minister: Mrs. Joyce Ganong is the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Job Training, Apprenticeship and Labour Market Policy and V.R.S. is an important program responsibility.
2. That Ministry officials continue with appropriate initiatives directed at integration of Ministry programs, by selecting one or two specific examples, such as "employer-based training" and require a plan to be developed and announced as a combined initiative to meet Job Training Branch and V.R.S. objectives.	The Ministry recognizes that individuals with disabilities are striving for equal participation in the competitive workforce. One of the major objectives of the Job Training Branch is to provide complementarity in programs, integrated access to training and employment services, and expert assistance in the field of training and employment. Career and vocational counselling, information on labour market conditions and a personal network of employer contacts are the responsibility of all professional staff in the Branch. For example, the Ministry is currently embarking on an action plan to promote equity of opportunity within the Apprenticeship system for persons with disabilities, women, visible minorities and natives.

BUCHER RECOMMENDATIONS	MINISTRY COMMENTS
A. Mandate and Objectives (Recommendation 3)	
3. That senior Ministry officials delay integration of job functions within the Apprenticeship and V.R.S. programs until the issue of a new role for V.R.S. has been determined.	The Branch, in the short term, does not intend to integrate the job functions of the Employment Training Counsellor and the Rehabilitation Consultant. However, over the longer term, these positions may be amalgamated, if it were to result in a significant improvement in services.
B. Policy Development and Consultation (4 & 5)	
4. That a comprehensive review of vocational rehabilitation policy be completed by senior Ministry officials on as expeditious basis as possible.	The Job Training Branch recently undertook a comprehensive review of its operational vocational rehabilitation policy, and an updated, more defined policy manual was developed. That manual is now in place in all offices and forms the basis for the delivery of the service. The Ministry is committed to maintaining current, pro-active policies; therefore, strategic policy reviews will take place and will include input from the community.
5. That the Ministry develop appropriate and active informal mechanisms of dialogue and consultation with all relevant external parties around ongoing policy development for vocational rehabilitation.	The Ministry has initiated a consultation process with the community concerning the pending appeal mechanism provided for in the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons (V.R.D.P.) Agreement. It is the Ministry's intention to continue this dialogue on a broader scale to encompass both the Bucher report and the future delivery mechanisms for its Vocational Rehabilitation Service.

BUCHER RECOMMENDATIONS	MINISTRY COMMENTS
C. Integration of Provincial Services (7, 9, 10 & 11)	
7. That Ministry officials designate V.R.S. as the organizational component providing leadership around programs and services directed at meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of the disabled in British Columbia.	The Ministry has re-established the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Committee on V.R.D.P. The membership on this Committee has been expanded and now includes representatives from the Premier's Office, Treasury Board, Assistant Deputy Ministers from the Ministries of Health, Social Services and Housing, Labour and Consumer Affairs, Education, Tourism and Provincial Secretary and is chaired by Advanced Education and Job Training. This Committee functions as a government-wide coordinating body. Recent activities have focussed on the establishment of an appeal mechanism for V.R.D.P. cost shared programs.
9. That senior officials of the Ministry initiate and make arrangements to review the other provincial ministries, strategies to address coordination of all programs and services concerned with vocation rehabilitation of the disabled.	
10. That senior officials of the Ministry consider making, at the earliest opportunity once operation has commenced, a proposal to the Premier's Advisory Council, that the Council address the major issue of integration of all aspects of the provincial rehabilitative process of the disabled, including housing, transportation, recreation, education and employment.	Mrs. Ganong has met with the Premier's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities.
11. That senior Ministry officials review and decide on the establishment of a broadly represented Provincial Steering Committee. It should include, but not necessarily be limited to, representatives from V.R.S., non-profit agencies, community colleges, employers, labour unions and the Provincial Apprenticeship Training Board. It would also be appropriate to include representatives who are disabled, as well as representatives of community or agency organizations, professional associations and religious organizations.	As mentioned earlier, the Assistant Deputy Ministers' Steering Committee now has a representative of the Tourism and Provincial Secretary, who will provide a link to the Premier's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities. This direct link will ensure that integration of all of government's initiatives for the disabled operate in a coordinated manner. As the activities of this group evolves, linkages with the community will be a consideration.

BUCHER RECOMMENDATIONS	MINISTRY COMMENTS
D. Public Relations (6 & 8)	
6. That the Ministry develop a communications program, utilizing individuals and written materials to enhance the broadest possible understanding of and compliance with Ministry policy.	The Job Training Branch has recently undertaken a comprehensive staff training initiative. An initial two day workshop, reviewing the new operational V.R.S. policy manual has been completed. Additional staff training has been planned for the near future. The staff is currently developing workshops on the new V.R.S. policy and other programs and services. These workshops will be delivered to various organizations and agencies currently involved in delivering vocational rehabilitation.
8. As an interim move, a small task group within the Ministry (no more than 3 persons) be created and mandated to carry out a very specific bridge building mission with agencies and organizations in the community, the first priority being to explain new Ministry programs, initiatives and directions to all interested parties. The small task group should be comprised of a V.R.S. person and one or two others from different Ministry program areas.	The Ministry will be seeking input during the consultation process on the establishment of the small task force Mr. Bucher recommends.
E. Delivery, Operations (14, 15 & 16)	
14. That senior Ministry officials adopt a plan which, when approved by Government, will redirect V.R.S. resources from the role of deliverers of services to the role of coordinators of services to be delivered through community agencies, colleges and individuals on contract.	The Ministry has developed an overall strategy to redirect Vocational Rehabilitation Service human resources from a role of direct service provision to one of coordination and administration of the services. Prior to implementation, however, it is understood that community groups wish to comment on the Bucher recommendations, and that these comments will be taken into consideration when finalizing the Ministry strategy. It is proposed that service delivery primarily be provided through community based agents/agencies. Ministry staff currently dedicated to V.R.S. would play an active role in coordinating services at the community level, insuring that the quality of the service, the contract standards and the integrity of the overall program are maintained.
15. Flowing from recommendation 14, that senior Ministry officials reassign rehabilitation consultants to carry out the following responsibilities: - policy coordination - information and education - evaluation and monitoring - professional development/standards - administration - program management - contract management - budget monitoring	

BUCHER RECOMMENDATIONS	MINISTRY COMMENTS
16. That owing to government initiatives around greater service delivery and autonomy on a regional basis, senior Ministry officials consider a maintenance group of rehabilitation consultants being assigned sole responsibility of reviewing and approving all requests for expenditures by agency organizations or individuals on contract. The objective is to maintain final decision making for vocational rehabilitation plans and costs within the Ministry.	The Ministry regards the intent of this recommendation to be essential in maintaining accountability. There are many options to achieve this and the selection of the option to be used will be dependent on information provided by central agencies such as Treasury Board, the Purchasing Committee and Attorney General, as well as the substance of this recommendation.
F. Organization Structure (12, 13, 17, 18 & 19)	
12. In line with recommendation 4, senior Ministry officials review how the policy development process integrates with the coordination role of the Provincial Coordinator.	The establishment of the Job Training, Apprenticeship and Labour Market Policy Division carried with it the restructuring of old, and development of new, processes and responsibilities. The recommendations noted in this section have formed an important part in this review. It is acknowledged that there is need for leadership in vocational rehabilitation policy and programming and that roles must be coordinated.
13. That upon completion of a review as noted in recommendation 12, position of Provincial Coordinator be considered for revision, to reflect what in practice has become a financial and cost-sharing negotiation exercise on an annual basis but still be retained as a position and role, within the current Ministry.	
17. That senior Ministry officials consider changing the program area name Vocational Rehabilitation Service to Vocational Rehabilitation Administrative and Advisory Services and further, consider changing the position title of Rehabilitation Consultant to Rehabilitation Advisory Service Officer.	
18. That senior Ministry officials create a new position called Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Services.	
19. That the current position of Coordinator, Services to the Disabled, be retained and report to the newly created position, Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Services.	

BUCHER RECOMMENDATIONS	MINISTRY COMMENTS
G. Support Services (22 & 23)	
22. That Ministry officials consider entering into a contract with an independent professional with expertise in the field of technical aids.	The Ministry will, as the need arises, enter into a fee for service contract with a professional with expertise in the field of technical aids. Wherever possible, existing community based expertise will be utilized. The services of the Federal Government Job Access Network (J.A.N.), will also be utilized where appropriate. The Ministry will consider engaging the services of an independent professional with expertise in the field of ergonomics or rehabilitation engineering, as required on an individual client basis.
23. That Ministry officials consider entering into a contract with an independent professional with expertise in the field of ergonomics or rehabilitation engineering.	
H. Standards (20 & 21)	
20. That senior Ministry officials establish a committee comprised of government and agency representation whose task is to prepare a proposal on the contents and requirements of a provincial standard of competence and expertise for those working in the area of vocational rehabilitation services to the disabled.	The Ministry supports the setting of provincial standards for those individuals working in the area of vocational rehabilitation. The setting of such standards is traditionally the responsibility of each profession. The Ministry is prepared to participate fully in assisting organizations in this process. In the absence of such standards, the Ministry shall define the standards of competence and delivery when services are provided under the auspices of a Ministry contract, and shall monitor and reinforce such standards.
21. That senior Ministry officials, once a professional standards proposal has been agreed upon, establish a Professional Standards Committee, comprised of government and community based representatives and, chaired by a V.R.S. representative.	
I. Legislation (24)	
24. That senior Ministry officials re-visit the issue of need and appropriateness of a legislative framework for vocational rehabilitation programs in British Columbia.	The Ministry is currently reviewing the issue of legislation regarding vocational rehabilitation programs in British Columbia. This issue, which came to the forefront of the discussions around the V.R.D.P. appeal mechanism, is a key component for the long term discussions with community and consumer groups.

MINISTRY COMMENTS

Timetable

April 1989	Completion of operational V.R.S. policy manual.
May 1989	Training of Ministry staff regarding new policy manual and related issues.
September 1989	- Release of Bucher report. - Initial community consultation regarding strategies for the future delivery of V.R.S.
October to November 1989	- Contact time for consultation. - Completion of community consultation. - Formalization of Ministry plans for the delivery of system to be implemented.
January and February 1990	Introduction of new delivery system and training of human resources.
April 1990	Implementation of new system.
February and March 1991	Testing and fine tuning and evaluation of new system.

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Submitted to

The Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training

SEPTEMBER 1988
CONSULTANT: R.B. BUCHER

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CONSULTANT'S CONTRACT AND MANDATE

Arising from several discussions and meetings with officials of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, a contract was signed on June 27, 1988, engaging the consultative services of R.B. Bucher.

In consultation with the Vocational Rehabilitation Service Policy and Procedure Review Committee and the Co-ordinator of Services to the Disabled, the consultant was mandated to carry out:

- **a comprehensive review of the current Vocational Rehabilitation Service delivery system;**
- **consider strategies for the future delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS);**
- **an administrative overview; and**
- **a two-year plan outlining recommendations for the delivery of services respecting Ministry priorities and current requirements of the VRDP Agreement.**

A report resulting from the review was required by September 30, 1988 and would be submitted to senior officials of the Ministry on that date.

PROCESS FOLLOWED DURING CONSULTANT'S REVIEW

During an initial meeting with Deputy Minister Isabel Kelly, on April 27, 1988, the consultant described the process that would be followed and, which was thought would produce the best result in undertaking a review of the VRS program.

Accordingly, personal interviews and also, when required, telephone interviews, were conducted with many individuals representing government, non-profit agencies and in some cases, professional contractors representing themselves. In several cases, some of the individuals represented not only an organization but also were people who had a specific and personal disability.

In all cases, the interviews were conducted using a question matrix and in each (interview) the same basic questions were asked. In some cases, more specific questions were asked due to the differing relationships that existed between an organization or individual and VRS.

Most interviews were within a one and one-half hour (1) period, although many went longer, with some running to the three to four hour range.

Appendix I provides a list of those interviewed and the organizations with which they are associated.

MAJOR ASSUMPTIONS IDENTIFIED

In undertaking this consulting contract it was essential for the consultant to identify and declare any important assumptions which could or would impact on the review and its outcome. Those assumptions thought to be significant are stated below for the edification of the reader.

- **A Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) is both a valid and an important program in the array of social programs delivered through a Provincial Government mechanism.**
- **The vocational rehabilitation service program should not be reviewed with a view to collapsing.**
- **The Premier's Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities was not established to supplant or replace the role and mandate of VRS.**
- **Given the current changes taking place within government at the provincial level, an opportunity exists to consider the role and mandate of VRS and make modifications thought to be relevant to overall government direction and responsive and appropriate to addressing the important needs of the disabled community.**
- **Broad consultation with relevant parties was a necessary ingredient in establishing integrity for the overall review process.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An opportunity is available to make fundamental and significant change around how the vocational rehabilitation needs of the mentally and physically disabled are met in British Columbia.

A review of the vocational rehabilitation services delivery system has been completed through a process which sought and received broad input from experts and practitioners both working in government and in the community.

The information received indicates that the current system of providing services to the disabled is not a bad one but one nonetheless which requires change.

The resources which reside in the community are vast but are not being utilized to the fullest extent.

By creating new government administrative and operational support mechanisms and reinforcing existing ones, there is every reason to conclude the resources available in the community will rise to the growing challenges created in serving those who, as a part of the provincial population, because of mental or physical disability, struggle to achieve often only the most modest levels of education, mobility, housing, accessibility, employment – in a word basic dignity.

A series of recommendations address the structural, management, leadership, policy development, funding, accountability and information issues which, in part or total, endeavour to remedy current weaknesses and enhance current strengths in the system.

There is no magic solution available, only hard work, dedication and respect for divergent opinions, but all of which can achieve the real and only important goal – the best vocational rehabilitation service program to the disabled that can be.

SECTION A

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

As consultant on this project, a rarely experienced privilege has been granted of meeting and discussing with a variety of dedicated professionals and practitioners an important social program. Not unexpectedly, the specific program under discussion is one which is firmly rooted in the belief that not only 'social good' results but also, economic benefit derives from carrying out vocational rehabilitation programming and services.

The interviews, whether conducted with representatives of external agencies or with staff working at a variety of levels within government, consistently demonstrated that professionalism and commitment were present in the system. The consultant has come away from the exercise with a positive view of the collective internal and external capacities and the preparedness of those interviewed, to address and find solutions to current and future challenges, associated with the provisions of services to the community of physically and mentally disabled in British Columbia.

The remarks above in no way suggest however, nor should they be interpreted as meaning there are no perceived and real weaknesses in the current VRS delivery system. Likewise, it would be appropriate to consider thoroughly the force and candor with which those who were interviewed spoke, whether working inside or outside of government.

The next part of this report, called Review of Issues, summarizes the kinds and importance of issues raised during the interviews. Recommendations will be set down later in the recommendations section of the report. One issue however, that the consultant has had frequently raised during the interviews concerns the report itself and what will happen with the report after being submitted to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training. In a sense this issue is really two issues; one concerning accessibility of the report and the other concerning process should some or all of the consultant's recommendations be thought appropriate for implementation. The consultant, on reflection, did not consider it proper or relevant to the contract mandate to make specific recommendations on those matters.

Having said that however, the importance of these issues should not be understated nor under-appreciated by the reader. Hence, the consultant follows with some observations which are intended to elevate for the reader's consideration, the importance of these issues and, what is seen as potential consequences or impact should the matters of accessibility to and the process of dealing with the report, not be resolved in some appropriate and observable way.

Briefly, the consultant has observed within government that both historically and currently real mechanisms of dialogue and consultation with external stakeholders have been poorly supported. This has resulted in poor utilization of the total provincial resource working to service the needs of the disabled but worse, it has allowed a certain mistrust of government and its motives to creep into the environment and relationships within it. If the consultant's report were not to be made accessible or if recommendations were implemented without discussion and consultation with the parties affected, a real and powerful resource within the community could be lost or, at least significantly under-utilized.

The consultant has observed that while as a matter of record, agencies within the community did not co-operate with one another very often or very well, this is no longer the case. There is a strong and emergent sense of oneness – of working for the same cause, taking place. It is thought to be a positive and progressive step forward and very much to the advantage of government that such cohesive and convergent directions occur among agencies servicing the needs of the disabled. This will be discussed further in Part 3.0 of the report. But it seems for the moment an opportunity for closer, stronger and more effective working relationships exists and depending on how the issues of accessibility of the report and process around the recommendations within it are managed, could largely determine whether the opportunity is seized for the ultimate benefit of all interested and relevant parties.

SECTION B

REVIEW OF ISSUES

1.0 LOCATION OF VRS PROGRAM WITHIN MINISTRY OF ADVANCED EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING

The subject of program delivery can appropriately be addressed by starting with a review of where the program itself has been, and is now located.

1.1 Historical Reflections

It is not a widely held view that the VRS program ended up as part of the Ministry's Apprenticeship and Employment Training Branch by virtue of a thorough planning exercise and good management on the part of government. The impression the consultant received was that many people, working both inside and outside government considered the original move of VRS (then called Division for Aid to the Handicapped) from the Ministry of Health, was not thought out or appropriate. This notion appears to have carried forward with the next move which saw the VRS program, along with other programs, removed from the Ministry of Labour and Consumer Services and placed in its current location within the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, Apprenticeship and Employment Training Branch.

There is a wide divergence of opinion about whether it was the right and best location for VRS when part of the Ministry of Health. Some expressed the view that the medical model of MOH was compatible with the philosophy and objectives of rehabilitative processes. Others expressed the view that an MOH mandate for overall community health overlooked or was, at least, insensitive to the 'client-oriented' exigencies of a vocational rehabilitation program. Others saw MOH as simply too massive a bureaucracy for such a small VRS program to be a visible and important part.

Interestingly, there was much more agreement about VRS's location within the Ministry of Labour. Perhaps, it reflects the views that insufficient planning occurred before the move took place, but whatever the reasons, a significant majority of those interviewed did not consider VRS was appropriately located within the Ministry of Labour. It seems the notion of VRS providing a "service" to its clientele was clearly compromised during the VRS tenure at the Ministry of Labour.

1.2 Employment Training Branch and VRS

While the attitude prevails that little planning occurred before VRS was moved, the fact is, most people who were interviewed felt very comfortable with the present VRS location. Further, they thought the perceived goals and objectives of an apprenticeship and employment training program complemented and were compatible with vocational rehabilitation goals and objectives, notwithstanding that the issues and problems faced by VRS clients differed significantly.

1.3 The Ideal

The emphasis of those interviewed was not on <u>where</u> the VRS program is located but rather what the VRS program would be. A significant number of interviewees believed it was long overdue for the government to recognize the immense problems associated with physical and mental disability and respond accordingly by establishing a specific government ministry, such as, Ministry for Persons with Disability, was suggested.

It may be appropriate to seek an ideal solution in the creation of a district ministry concerned with disabled persons. However, there are many important issues to address around policy, operations, leadership, program development, communications, etc., without which first being resolved, a newly created ministry would not remedy. The creation of a ministry concerned with the disabled may emerge as an important and first challenge for the Premier's Advisory Council when it begins operating. This consultant rightly limited his focus to what is in place now. Having done so, and having carefully listened to the interested parties when interviewed,

believes the current location a good one and, a workable one in future, assuming specific changes occur. These areas noted for change will be identified in several other areas of the report. It is important for the present that Ministry officials, at a senior level, reinforce the appropriateness of the VRS program location in the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training.. While much support exists in the external community for VRS's current location, there is mistrust and apprehension about whether or how long it will stay. This clearly is of advantage to no one.

2.0 OPERATIONAL, STRUCTURAL AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES.

A number of issues relating to program integration, policy development, management and leadership, rehabilitation expertise and visibility/credibility will be considered in this section.

2.1 Program Integration

Today, the VRS program operates as a small, distinct and somewhat unrelated program relative to the other programs offered through the Ministry's Apprenticeship and Employment Training Branch. The fact that Rehabilitation consultants in both regional and field offices report to Area Supervisors has in no way facilitated better program co-ordination and integration. This view is held broadly considering the frequency with which it was raised during the interviews by both government and non-government people alike. Closer attention to program initiatives which may be suitable for co-ordination and integration may be inevitable but, should not have to be so with a negative result. Planning exercises aimed at bringing the goals and objectives of one program together with another, so that there is a common area of overlap, is good business and effective utilization of the total resources available, both monetary and human. There would be significant support in the community for establishing some multi-program common objectives in the area around job training. Take the ready example of developing some common objectives for integrating "employer-based" training initiatives that respond to both Job Training needs and VRS needs.

In order to properly assess integration of personnel, the consultant would have had to interview an equal number of people in Apprenticeship and Employment Training as were interviewed in VRS. Clearly, there was no time to undertake a review of that kind or magnitude. Likewise, it was not an issue which directly related to the consultant's mandate. Indirectly, however, it is related and requires some observations. Perhaps while there are many professional or even personal irritants, between VRS staff and Apprenticeship staff, none goes to the heart of the issue more

quickly or severely than the issue of cross-functioning of rehabilitation consultants and apprenticeship counsellors. The subject of integration as it applies to individuals being trained and able to perform several job functions appears to be premature. It is a subject that will be commented upon more in the section of the report titled, VRS – A New Role and Mandate.

The strategies now being considered for the delivery of employment and training programs on a regional basis allows for a thoughtful and incremental step towards appropriate integration of all Ministry programs to occur and others, especially which concern holistic rehabilitative processes.

2.2 Policy Development

It has been stated that even if nothing else ever emanates from government, at least government should be the best example you can find of how policy is developed and promulgated.

During the interviews, the consultant did not receive glowing or flattering responses to questions raised around the area of policy development within VRS or the Ministry as a whole.

Many people interviewed simply stated they were not aware at all of what either the government's policy was or the Ministry's, with respect to services to the disabled. Many also expressed views about both ambiguous and sometimes contradictory policy statements within the Ministry. Others yet, expressed the view there was no policy – as they had never seen a single compilation of documentation around policy matters.

Many remarks were also made that the development of policy around services to the disabled has never routinely or appropriately sought the informed input of people working independently or with organizations in the community.

The uniformity with which policy is interpreted across the province by rehabilitation consultants is a matter seriously challenged by those interviewed. Agency representatives expressed anger and frustration over the perceived inequality of

acquiring some support or funding for a client in one area of the province but, denied such support elsewhere, when considered by a different consultant. This issue is raised not as an indictment of rehabilitation consultants. Rehab consultants who face inordinately high work demands will quite naturally find easement of casework problems attractive through the vagaries or non-existence of a policy framework.

There is not an organizational issue more critical to revenue/funding, human resources deployment, administration, program development and delivery than that of policy. It is the cement which binds all other organizational components together. Many government and non-government organizations have survived poor management, unmarketable programs or products or insufficient revenue/funding. But an organization cannot purport to be effective and a competent leader in its field if no systematic policy development process is present. Recommendations pertaining to this vital area will be found in Section D of this report.

At the heart of any organizational issue is the question: what is our policy; how was the policy arrived at and, how do we make it universally known and uniformly practiced?

2.3 Management and Leadership

Frequently during the interviews the consultant was advised that nowhere in British Columbia today was there seen to be any leadership around programs and services to the disabled, at either a political or bureaucratic level in government. While that may or may not in fact be a correct perception, the matter of political leadership, at least, resides outside the scope of this review.

However, within government bureaucracy, leadership ought to be identified as a management responsibility and it seems changes which have occurred in recent years have given rise to the perception that no one person within management at the Ministry is a focal point for programs and services relating to the disabled.

In many instances those who were interviewed felt that when the VRS program had its own director, a focal point within management existed. The profile of the VRS program was, as a result of having a managing director, considered to be more recognizable and co-ordination of provincial wide vocational rehabilitation activities better managed and more consistently applied.

It could be a subject of endless debate whether a director position is necessary and the best or right level at which to rest the responsibilities for day to day management and co-ordination of the vocational rehabilitation program. Developing a focal point within the management structure is however, desirable and required if the issues of VRS policy development, program development and delivery are to be integrated with the other primary program areas of the Branch, when and where it is appropriate for this to occur.

2.4 Rehabilitation Expertise

The subject of expertise residing within the management levels of the Ministry was raised too frequently to not justify a report of the concerns expressed.

It is clear that in some cases the interviewees believed only when the most senior levels of the Ministry's management were occupied with people possessing knowledge and professional expertise around rehabilitation issues would they be satisfied.

In Section 2.3 of the report, the issue of developing a focal point within management for vocational rehabilitation policy, programs and delivery was discussed. The issue now under discussion, also it seems, addresses the developing of a focal point. In this case, it is a focal point of expertise. Must this expertise reside within the senior management levels? The consultant has reviewed this issue thoroughly and, while seeing the attractiveness of having your focal point for management of VRS being the one and same person as the focal point of expertise, still cannot find sufficient argument to compel acceptance of that position.

A focal point of management and a focal point of expertise are both needed but, are not seen as necessarily compatible as always mutually inclusive. The key is to setting a happy medium in deciding how high up the chain of command you require specific and technical expertise as well as overall management competence.

2.5 Visibility and Credibility

...the story goes: "Do you know how someone, unrepresented and not supported by an agency would contact VRS to receive assistance?" Before the consultant could answer he's advised: "He wouldn't, because VRS does not advertise and even if you work in the area and know the network it's difficult to locate VRS as a government program or even access the telephone number from a basic phone directory."

Many comments and expressions of concern were raised by those interviewed when the subject of the visibility of VRS was discussed. Many thought the VRS visibility as low as it was, came about not by accident, but by a deliberate plan to "control" the amount of demand for VRS services by controlling the profile or visibility. Others did not see it as a plan but rather as symbolic of the level of importance attached to programs designed and intended to service the needs of the disabled community of British Columbia.

While the consultant's review indicates the visibility of the VRS program is low, one should not expect it otherwise, given there is no consistently used information and communications framework around the VRS program in place. This will be addressed in Section C of the report in much more detail. It was also noted in an overwhelming majority of interviews that the interviewee felt the VRS, which previously had enjoyed high credibility, had been eroded. Reasons for this view were all over the map; some economic, some staffing, some policy and responsiveness reasons, to mention a few. The credibility of individual rehabilitation consultants did not seem to suffer however. To the degree those interviewed from agencies felt an erosion of the VRS program had occurred, they did not attribute the problem as one started by or contributed to by the rehabilitation consultants. In fact, the general comment was one of empathy and respect for rehab consultants doing a difficult job without sufficient supports.

Interestingly enough however, when the consultant pursued questions around individual rehabilitation consultant performance, it was very clear that many felt rehabilitation consultants were not uniformly competent or energetic in carrying out their professional activities and responsibilities.

3.0 ISSUES CONCERNED WITH LINKAGES BETWEEN VRS AND EXTERNAL AGENCIES

In this section, issues pertaining to operational mechanisms, resources and skills will be reviewed.

3.1 Operational Mechanisms

If an organization wants a new program developed and requires that it will be professionally managed and delivered and, it will be monitored and evaluated to assure the program objectives are being met in an effective and cost efficient manner – what kind of system or mechanisms must be put in place which link the organization to its clients, consumers or shareholders to achieve the desired result?

The question raised above endeavours to focus and get at the types of issues raised during the interviews, which appeared to be major aggravations to agency representatives and very much more, an important issue to address around capturing the energy, expertise and commitment of a large community resource residing in British Columbia – but not tapped.

The linkages between VRS and the agencies have changed in recent times and it has been expressed frequently during the interviews as a change for the worse.

While many agency representatives still meet individually with a rehab consultant – it is almost always concerning a specific case/client.

Agency representatives felt the previous practice, where local or regional representatives of agencies met regularly with the rehabilitation consultant(s) working in the area, was useful and informative, in terms of specific problems in case management. But also, it created an important link between the relevant parties around the bigger issues of policy and program development.

Why this practice no longer occurs ranges in opinion from – the Ministry no longer desired to have or support such mechanisms of dialogue to, the rehabilitation consultants logistically could no longer afford the time, given increasing case loads.

Establishing or re-establishing appropriate linkages with the external community will be the subject of further discussion in Section C of the report. Linkages which support real dialogue and input into policy, program development and evaluation of programs will become increasingly more important as government modifies the nature of its role and relationship with its publics. If perceptions are valid that the provincial government, through new policy, programs and philosophy, seeks to be more out of the business of delivering specific service entities to the community and more into overseeing the delivery carried out by others, then linkages to the community of agencies in British Columbia are going to be of the highest priority. Keep the bridges strong!

3.2 Resources and Skills

Including a brief reporting out on resources and skills in this section of the report is done to highlight the value of the huge reservoir of talent available to be drawn upon and which is poised to meet the challenges entrusted to it – if asked.

One of the frequently expressed frustrations heard from agency representatives was how little they were called upon (used) in addressing and finding solutions to the massive problems associated with vocational rehabilitation of the disabled.

While the resources and skills available in the community are significant, there also was evidence during the interviews of an implicit recognition that not all agencies were equally imbued with resources and talent to address current or future challenges. Also, since the level of co-operation and co-ordination between and among agencies has been so poor historically, there was very little precedence to draw upon for one agency who lacked certain resources or skills, joining with another agency to accomplish a resolution to a specific vocational rehabilitation problem.

Again, Section C of the report will address the issue of utilization of the immense resources available in B.C. However, as a comment for the moment—it is truly impressive to have seen the competent and dedicated treasury of resources currently present in the community at large. No dollar figure, has to the consultant's knowledge ever been placed on what such resources would cost, if, in each and every case they had to be paid for—the total figure would, one hazards a guess, be astronomical.

4.0 INTER-GOVERNMENTAL AND INTER-MINISTERIAL ISSUES AROUND VRS

It seems to the consultant that of those interviews conducted with non-government persons, many had at one time worked in government. Thus it is neither illogical nor even unlikely that so many of those interviewed had something to say around inter-governmental and inter-ministerial issues.

4.1 Federal-Provincial Issues

The subject here is not around the actual funding of VRS through the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Act or Agreement or, with the other provincial programs funded similarly through VRDP or the Guaranteed Available Income for Need Act (G.A.I.N.) to the extent the latter complies with the Canada Assistance Plan.. The funding issues will be covered in Section 6.0 of the report.

The Federal-Provincial issues as a subject is raised because of the frequency with which it was cited as a major matter for review during the interviews. The discussion is limited to problems arising from gaps in the system on the one hand and areas of overlap and duplication on the other.

As the reader will already know, rehabilitation programs in the United States have advanced significantly beyond what we experience in Canada, in particular around the American resolve to make workable a "nationwide" program, without infringing on the territorial responsibilities of the individual states. Canada would clearly benefit from a more integrated national focus on rehabilitation issues and most evidence and opinion on the subject holds that the disabled would benefit even more. Unless or until that day arrives in Canada however, surely we have opportunities and obligations to make the current system work as responsively and effectively as possible.

In this regard, much interest was expressed in having B.C. take a leadership role around co-ordinating rehabilitation programs funded through one or more of the federal-provincial funding arrangements. The conventional thinking is that financial

resources will never be sufficient to meet the current, let alone expanding needs of the disabled community. There is therefore, a need to evaluate where current programs are directed and try to reduce the amount of unnecessary overlap and duplication by re-deploying available resources into areas the community of professionals know to be most in need of support. In addition to vocational rehabilitation or employment issues raised, the areas of Housing, Transportation and Education were the most often raised as ones suitable for a more integrated federal-provincial approach.

The consultant on review also points to the area of recreation as one requiring major address to meet the ever present and growing realities of a nation of people, both disabled and non-disabled, with increasing leisure time on its hands.

Finally, the number of Federal-Provincial Committees which have been created to address either policy or funding issues around the VRDP Agreement, while not insignificant in number have nonetheless, been unable to instill confidence in the community that a plan, better co-ordination and more integrated policy approaches have been accomplished.

4.2 Inter-Ministerial Issues

At the provincial scene, likewise there has been no shortage of committee structures established to address policy and funding issues relative to the VPDP.

Taken from the interviews, the majority of opinion holds that committee structures notwithstanding, there is little co-ordination between and among provincial ministries concerned with servicing the needs of the mentally and physically disabled in British Columbia.

Additionally, many people felt that other ministries referred or dumped their clients onto the Ministry of Advanced Education VRS program as those other ministries, for one reason or another were unable to resolve the client's problem. In one sense this is very much a credit to VRS – it suggests that VRS has the knowledge and skill to deal with many of the most intractable rehabilitation problems. On the other hand, the

budgetary resources of VRS is minuscule compared to other larger ministries and it doesn't take people long to realize the VRS program can only accomplish a limited amount within a specific dollar allocation.

As stated earlier in this report, policy development lies at the heart of any program – any effective program. In this regard, the subject of policy co-ordination emerged again and again during the interviews. The consultant recognizes that strong and historically well established lines of responsibility exist around provincial programs with each ministry exercising its mandate and administration around its own programs. What exists is an opportunity for better co-ordination of policy inter-ministerially and VRS is one area where this co-ordinating function could be located with dramatic results and only modest re-alignment of roles. This opportunity will be discussed in Section C of the report.

5.0 VRS HUMAN RESOURCES: DEPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

Generally speaking, the rehabilitation consultants working in VRS are held in respect and with appreciation for their dedicated work. As a group of professionals, the rehabilitation consultants are seen to possess knowledge and skill in managing the many difficult rehab problems they encounter and are often credited with making the difference between a solution being found and not.

The frustrations that most frequently arose during the interviews, therefore, were not directed at consultants for any personal or professional reasons. Rather, the frustrations focussed on the rehab consultants perceived role change and the slowness of the VRS system to respond.

The slowness issue seemed to be consistently directed at the size of the human resource compliment now doing VRS work, both at the professional staff delivery level and the rehab clerk support level. Agency representatives felt a major erosion of the VRS program occurred when the number of rehab consultants was reduced and, when strong support from the clerical area was lost or became more diffuse – now providing clerical support for a variety of program areas. Many felt this all happened to the detriment of VRS and was a plan conceived to reduce overall numbers of staff and not in any way responsive to the integrity of human resource management of programs.

There is little or no argument about the growing number of physically and mentally disabled requiring services and that this reality is occurring at the same time that people working in government to meet those needs is not likewise growing or keeping pace.

No one argues that increasing staff compliments in a government-run program would likely result in more needs of the disabled being met, at least quantitatively speaking. Such a direction is unrealistic however, in that almost everywhere one looks at government programs in Canada, there is a current trend to downsize and

de-emphasize the level and scope of government involvement. This is not a new phenomenon and will be the order of the day in the future as well, by all accounts.

If one reads this situation correctly, the VRS program is at an important juncture in its evolution. Levels of staff to meet growing needs will not likely be available so one asks – then how will those needs be met?

The interviews brought forward a widely divergent number of opinions as to how VRS resources should be deployed in future One of the few, if not only consistent themes produced was that things could not remain as they are. The long delays in accessing services through VRS was not only a major irritant to agency representatives and their clients but, was viewed as something that would only get worse in the current VRS system.

What the consultant found particularly encouraging is that there was no apparent blind and immovable attitude generally around preserving the current VRS system at all costs. People are ready to see change and contribute to its evolution.

With these thoughts in mind a framework for a new VRS role and mandate have been addressed and form part of the Section C of this report.

6.0 FUNDING VRS AND THE VRDP

The subject of funding, of dollars allocated for a program or service, is quite appropriately viewed as an integral part of any delivery system. Several issues around funding VRS were raised during the interviews and have been organized into three sub-categories: funding and scope of VRDP; financial administration and policy co-ordination; and, role of the Provincial Co-ordinator around VRDP.

6.1 Funding and Scope of VRDP

In a majority of cases those interviewed, whether working inside or outside of government, expressed the opinion that on a client by client basis, they had not frequently run into the problem of dollar insufficiency when attempting to do a specific vocational rehabilitation plan. Agency representatives felt they had received much support from rehab consultants when trying to obtain approval for a specific rehabilitation initiative and in some cases, even if the budget in one office of VRS had been depleted, effort had been made to access some budget dollars from another office where perhaps a surplus was available.

Overall, the impression most people had was that the current budget for VRS and the delivery of services at the current level were compatible. The most frequently raised issue however, was not actually budget but the scope of programs and services available in British Columbia which were "fundable" as part of the cost-sharing arrangements through the VRDP but had not been interpreted as such at the present time in B.C.

The consultant has reviewed the most recently signed VRDP agreement and would conclude that the scope of that document is exceedingly large and as such, creates a significant potential for program diversity and flexibility of service delivery, available under a cost-sharing mechanism with the federal government.

Interpreting the nature and scope of vocational rehabilitation programs and services to be made available in B.C. is the responsibility of senior people in the provincial

government. The more broadly the VRDP agreement is interpreted however, the greater the need for effective policy, program and evaluation tools to be in place. Without such stable and operating infrastructures, a service may be viewed as more generous, more benign but, it will not necessarily be a better thing to do. The notion of bigger being better is seriously flawed. Whatever is done, should be done with early response, with quality, with professionalism and with regular review so an assessment can be made that it is still meeting valid needs in the community.

As an aside, the consultant was advised on numerous occasions by agency representatives that great difficulty was encountered in trying to obtain a copy of the VRDP agreement. As such, many had phoned or written to their respective Members of Parliament constituency offices to obtain a copy of the agreement forthwith. The consultant has addressed this issue as part of the Information and Education components to be discussed in Section C of the report.

6.2 VRDP: Financial Administration and Policy Co-ordination

As mentioned earlier in the report, many concerns were raised about the perceived lack of a systematic and consultative policy development process in the VRS. The area of financial administration as it pertains to the VRDP was similarly raised. Many people expressed almost total ignorance of how the VRDP was administered and how the financial process linked with policy and program development. It appears very little is understood of how the federal - provincial negotiations, which form the basis for the cost-sharing under the VRDP takes place; how priorities are set and what input is received in determining future directions around programming for which cost-sharing under the VRDP agreement will be sought.

Those representatives of agencies who participated in discussion with Ministry officials during the most recent review (1988) of the VRDP agreement felt very positively about the experience. This clearly emerges as an important form of the kind of dialogue the community wants and will actively continue to seek. But equally clear is the opinion that when the previous role of the Provincial Co-ordinator was redefined (after 1982) many feel an important operational (ie. day to day administration and

supervision of rehab consultants) and policy development and co-ordination linkage on a provincial-wide basis was lost. It has been observed that a move to greater regional service delivery system will only exacerbate the already weak level of VRS co-ordination provincially and the distance between program needs and VRDP funding.

These subjects are discussed in Section C of the report.

6.3 The Role of the Provincial Co-ordinator Around VRDP

It is not difficult to understand that confusion exists around the role of the Provincial Co-ordinator within the community when government produced literature on the subject is unclear itself. Consider the following examples.

In example one[1], the report states the following: Provincial Co-ordinator

> **"The office of the Provincial Co-ordinator is responsible for representing the interests of British Columbia with respect to the negotiation and administration of the VRDP Agreement, and for providing a central unit for intra-provincial co-ordination and program development."**

In example two[2], the catalogue notes the following:

> **"The Office of the Provincial Co-ordinator is responsible for the administration of the VRDP Agreement for British Columbia and for the central co-ordination and administration of the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation network in British Columbia."**

In both cases, these public documents were printed in the same year and following the transfer of the VRS program to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training. Without exhaustively analyzing the two statements, it is noteworthy to observe in Example 1 the provincial co-ordinator has negotiations as part of the responsibilities but not in Example 2. As well, in Example 2 not only is there administration of the

VRDP but also administration of the comprehensive vocational rehabilitation network in B.C., while in Example 1 the job requires only administration of the VRDP.

On many occasions those who were interviewed stated they had never met with the Provincial Co-ordinator to discuss policy, programs or even the status of funding arrangements under the VRDP. This should not really surprise anyone, however. Since 1982, when the Provincial Co-ordinator's job was redefined, there has been no mandate for the person doing the job to reach out broadly and network with the community of agencies in B.C. The emphasis of the provincial co-ordinator's work has been on the annual review of the cost-sharing program in place with the federal government around not only VRS, but all provincial programs or services, eligible within the framework of the VRDP.

An opportunity exists, along with other changes being made within the Ministry, to also address the role of the Provincial Co-ordinator. The consultant observes that while this position is currently located within the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, there does not seem to be sufficient or appropriate advantage gained from such location. Yet, to move the position from its current location would not necessarily be any advantage and in fact, might result in a major disadvantage to the Ministry and the overall administration of its programs. This issue will be the subject of further review in Section C of the report.

SECTION C

VRS: A NEW ROLE AND MANDATE

In the following section a new role and mandate for the VRS program of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training will be discussed. In some ways it is significantly different than the current role and mandate of VRS and yet, parts of the new role will draw heavily from the existing structures' relationships, processes and past practices.

What is offered in this section is fundamentally predicated on the belief that there is no turning the clock back. VRS will survive any government changes but it will only do so if it can rise to the challenges now present and all the while keep clearly in vision the needs of the disabled as the best, the right and the only reason for any VRS program to exist at all.

Having completed a consultation process, the consultant, upon reflection of the relevant issues, has concluded the VRS program, through a plan of re-organization and re-definition, should move out of the work of delivery of rehabilitation services on a client basis. A new VRS program would be responsible for the information, administration, co-ordination, evaluation and overall direction of the delivery of services to the disabled by those who work in community agencies, community colleges or as independent contractors.

As many contracts and relationships are currently in place between VRS and externally located organizations or individuals, what is being proposed is not really new, except that VRS would not be competing any longer (in the new role) with external organizations and individuals in the area of service delivery.

The consultant implicitly recognizes that for a number of VRS rehabilitation consultants, their level of job satisfaction and commitment is primarily maintained through the direct contact with and service to clients. But this has changed also over the last few years. Rehabilitation consultants in VRS have found increasing work demands, whether resulting from higher client volumes or new programs to administer, such as T.P.D.P. or P.P.P., has

meant more time being "desk bound" and decreasing levels of contact with clients. In other words, the notion of providing "service delivery" to the physically and mentally disabled on an individual basis has already changed because of operational demands, not out of a systematic review of the VRS program. The level of service delivery has also been affected by an organizational change which brought a re-deployment and utilization of support staff (rehabilitation clerks) to other Ministry programs, whereas these people had historically been dedicated to rehabilitation support work.

The new role and mandate for VRS under discussion neither contemplates decreasing nor increasing VRS staff. It assumes at this time a constant and current level of full time equivalents (FTE's) but with significant modification of duties and re-assignment of responsibilities. It also assumes that within the current compliment of rehabilitation consultants, not in all cases will interest and aptitude be compatible with the proposed new role. At the same time, the new role for VRS necessitates that some new and different skills be located within the program and modest training of rehab consultants would be required in a number of areas to effectively carry out new responsibilities. The encouraging experience is that many of the consultants appeared interested in and would be challenged by a new role but also, had skills which could be upgraded and mobilized around a new VRS role and mandate. Each aspect of the new role and mandate will be discussed in the following pages and in cases where new skills or upgraded skills are required, they will be specifically identified.

1.0 VRS - A NEW MANDATE

It is proposed that a new mandate for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) be created. This new mandate would establish VRS as the centre of expertise and leadership around vocational rehabilitation in British Columbia. To accomplish this, it is considered a legislative framework for services to the disabled be created. This does not mean that a new piece of legislation such as some have suggested – 'the Rehabilitation of Disabled Person Act' is required. Rather, it is the preferred way of identifying not only the importance of a particular government program by giving it a

statutory framework but, it strengthens the supporting foundations so that specific government departments operate with the strongest mandate emanating from the social administrative, statutory and ethical imperatives of the day.

The need for changes in the role of VRS, as discussed in the pages which follow, will not be eliminated should a legislative framework be considered ill-timed or unnecessary. It seems however, that any new roles for VRS being designed and effectively carried out would be significantly enhanced if embraced by a new, British Columbia statute concerned with vocational rehabilitation of the disabled.

2.0 VRS CO-ORDINATION ROLE AROUND POLICY AND PROGRAMS

The VRS program within the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, Job Training Branch, is seen as the logical choice for co-ordination of policy and program development around all services to the disabled in British Columbia concerned with vocational rehabilitation.

This bold step would be seen as a major progressive move towards ultimately having policy and programs concerning all aspects of the rehabilitative process integrated within government and co-ordinated out of one area. For the present however, only vocational rehabilitation programs delivered by government bodies and funded through the cost-sharing arrangements of the VRDP are being recommended for consideration in this new co-ordination of policy role.

One should not underestimate the degree of philosophical differences or territoriality that exist between one government ministry or department and another. Unique and important differences which impact upon programs will always need to be addressed in policy development, but that is no reason for not bringing policy development into a co-ordinated process when, as with the Ministry of Advanced Education and the Ministry of Health, both have vocational rehabilitation programs eligible for cost-sharing under VRDP. Consumers, both agency and client types, would benefit

from having a single co-ordinating body with which to deal and government would benefit from a more manageable and cost-effective system of policy development.

Integration of all policy and programs, including those cost-shared under the Canada Assistance Plan (C.A.P.) should be the objective ultimately, but only after sufficient time and working out of any problems has occurred in the first stage.

VRS can and should become the centre of excellence for policy development concerning programs and services directed at meeting the needs of British Columbia's disabled community. Policy development requires input in order to ensure that what is developed truly meets needs. This means part of the process of developing policy must be designed to encourage and receive, to consult and dialogue with the world outside. A mechanism to accomplish this is the concept of a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee should be chaired and co-ordinated by VRS and would be a permanent structure. Further, the Steering Committee would be comprised of people representing the community agencies, colleges, industry, organized labour and the Provincial Apprenticeship Training Board (PATB). The Steering Committee would not be mandated to make policy to which the government would be bound, but rather would be a broadly based, multi-disciplinary group who give advice on policy development and feedback on whether new or old policy initiatives are working. The Steering Committee would exist and operate in the interests of supporting the VRS system, but could also be an appropriate and effective conduit for ensuring the Premier's Advisory Council is kept appraised of issues once it begins operating.

3.0 VRS: EVALUATION AND MONITORING

In the section of the report dealing with issues raised during the interviews, it was noted that in addition to the lack of integrated policy development within government ministries, there was also a wide divergence of policy practice occurring in non-profit agencies and even with vocational rehabilitation consultants employed by the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training.

With the trend towards greater delivery of services being carried out not by government departments, but through increased contracting, the issue of evaluation and monitoring of those with whom contracts exist becomes of major importance and while not a new role for VRS, certainly an expanded one. This is one area where VRS staff would benefit from additional training and upgrading of skills and access to professional evaluation services on a consulting basis when required.

The emphasis of this VRS role is not to be a 'watchdog' in the punitive sense. Because government cannot abdicate its own governance role of ensuring accountability exists in all operations—then there is a consequential need to satisfy the requirements through professionally developed and managed tools of evaluation and monitoring. Not only would this support uniform, consistent policy practice but also, as evaluation also includes setting objectives which are later to be evaluated, it means that new trends and creative initiatives can be incorporated and previous gaps in the vocational rehabilitation programs plugged. Establishing a systematic evaluation and monitoring program will allow for significantly increased inter-agency programming to occur. Historically very little co-operation between non-profit agencies has occurred with the result that duplication of efforts and costs often does. More inter-agency joint efforts should take place and must and would be encouraged through an appropriate and effective evaluation and monitoring program.

VRS is ideally situated and already knows most of the agencies situated in the community. Assisting the agencies to develop strong, effective programs and ensuring through evaluation they are maintained, benefits the disabled, the agencies and government.

For any evaluation and monitoring program to work well, those on whom it impacts must possess understanding of the objectives, content and process. Ideally, through the Steering Committee mechanism discussed earlier, or some other consultation process, it will be important to receive input into the design of any evaluation model chosen. Only in this way will organizations take ownership of the program and when there is a personal stake in anything—it almost always guarantees a successful result.

4.0 VRS: INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ROLE

Every sector of the British Columbia landscape is in need of more and more accurate information. The subject of vocational rehabilitation is no exception. Government, organized labour, the employer community (large and small) and the public at large, are not being kept informed with reliable information about the needs of the disabled and as such, there has never been a tapping of the resources in our community sufficiently and systematically carried out.

The timing is right and the need never greater for VRS to become an information and education centre concerning issues around vocationally rehabilitating the disabled. In no way has information been developed and directed to some or all of the sectors of our province in such a way that not only are the old historical myths broken down but also, a powerful community resource mobilized to assist more vigorously in finding solutions to rehabilitating the disabled.

In a real sense, a VRS information centre focussed on 'educating' its publics would have to be marketing a particular approach and philosophy. There is no way that government can do the immense work alone of trying to ensure that all citizens, both disabled and non alike, have dignified, viable and gainful employment. It is responsibility shared by all citizens; small and larger employers, labour unions, professional associations, educational institutions and even religious organizations. Getting information to all these publics with the hope of a good result will happen only if the information is before people on a regular and forceful basis.

Having as part of a new information program, a technical aids display, has been raised. It is felt there are some huge inaccuracies around what a technical aid can do, how they work, how much they cost, how long they last and why a person with one type of disability can acquire an aid of major expense quickly, while a person with a different disability is not even considered an appropriate candidate, or the priority is very low to acquire the aid. The development of a technical aids display is a good idea and one which may help immensely to identify fact from fiction, especially for the public at large. In the next section on contract management this subject is discussed further. It

is the opinion of this consultant however, that technical aids display, if supportable, should only be done in conjunction with a technical aids consultant.

Information programs and strategies could be very effectively administered in VRS and should not require more than one FTE to operate efficiently.

5.0 VRS - ADMINISTRATION ROLE

As more non-profit agencies, other community organizations and individuals increase their levels of programs and services one can see a stronger and more durable fabric of support develop in the community.

Having new players or even existing ones who are more active in meeting the needs of the disabled is very desirable but, will require an increased level of administrative expertise and co-ordination within VRS.

Three areas ought to be addressed in considering an increased administrative role for VRS: Program Management, Contract Management and Budget Monitoring.

In Program Management the focus in on specifically reviewing existing programs, whether they exist within government or non-profit, or other external agencies and, to assess whether these programs are supportable within the parameters of the VRDP; whether the organizations who run the programs are working in a valid and consistent way and finally, whether on review of all programs, a new level of synergy can be achieved by encouraging, when appropriate, the combining of some parts of programs or entire programs when possible, between or among agencies.

In Contract Management the objective is to increase the level of skill and co-ordination around managing the variety of contracts the Ministry now has and will have in greater numbers in future.

VRS already administers a number of contracts with individuals and organizations. Assuming the future holds that not only will increased numbers of contracts be

required but, contracts with differing units or professionals, VRS needs to build up a strong, professional administrative focus so that it will ensure appropriate levels of accountability continue to be in place. Two examples of contracts which ought to be considered are:

1. Contract with an expert in the area of technical aids for the disabled. Many occasions arise during the rehabilitative process where specific advice and input would ensure that the best decision is made in the client's interests. This does not necessarily have to translate into the most expensive decision and having this type of technical aids expertise available to the Ministry on a contract basis would facilitate getting a more accurate picture of the available options.

2. Contract with a rehabilitation engineer or ergonomist. If through a more focussed information and education role VRS are successful in activating new opportunities for the disabled to locate work, then ergonomic expertise around workplace design should be readily available. If a vocational rehabilitation program is developing well for a client and there is good momentum, it should not be lost because of a need to determine how to go about modifying a workplace to meet the client's needs. An ergonomist on contract would ensure that professional workplace design advice is available and at a time when it is required to keep the rehabilitation initiative on track.

It appears skills are already resident within VRS to carry out a more rigorous program of contract management. It would however, serve the interests of the Ministry and be more supportive for the individual to provide some training/upgrading to any VRS staff member asked to take on these responsibilities.

In all cases, the non-profit agencies felt a specific focus of contract management expertise was desirable and an area where they expressed much interest to co-operate.

The administrative controls around budget monitoring, if enhanced, will have several beneficial results.

Having a person responsible for scrutinizing on a provincial-wide basis, the voc-rehab expenditures should mean better co-ordination of individual office expenses and total system utilization of monies. This should assure not only an increased level of accountability but also, avoidance of the situation where a decision to carry out a rehab plan has been made and communicated to the relevant parties, only to learn there was no budget available to carry out the plan.

The more contracting with non-profit agencies or private contractors occurs, the greater the need will be for strong, co-ordinated budget management.

6.0 VRS: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS ROLE

While much competence and good will exists in the non-profit agencies now operating in B.C. and meeting the needs of the disabled, the fact is – there is no standard of conduct or professionalism in place or required.

VRS is seen as a focal point for developing and maintaining professional standards concerning vocational rehabilitation of the disabled.

It is understood that efforts have been made on a number of occasions in the past to try and establish a standard by which practitioners could be measured and certified as competent and professional – these efforts have all failed. It is also understood that some standards are in place in Canada, through C.A.R.P. and others, are available or are being developed south of the border.

The issue under discussion is not about how standards are developed or where they come from – rather it is an issue of responsibility and of accountability for ensuring that in British Columbia, any organization or individual that represents or works on behalf of disabled persons will do so with professionalism and competence and that it be known by clients, agencies, employers, labour unions and the public that anything

in the area of professionalism and competence which falls below a minimum standard established and agreed to, will not be tolerated by VRS.

This is not to encourage the development of oppressive or onerous controls. This new role for VRS is to ensure on one hand 'fly by night' organizations or individuals are not creating havoc on the disabled community and on the other hand for government to demonstrate it has not acquiesced in the role of ensuring the needs of the disabled are met which shows a caring side of government and also an accountability still in place.

This new role would require skills upgrading for VRS staff and support from a professional standards organization at least in the developmental stages. A VRS staff member asked to take on these new responsibilities would act very much as a resource to the external community and would work with all parties not in a punitive sense but, in a supportive sense to assist external groups or individuals achieving the required standards.

As progress around government's plans to establish greater degrees of delivery of employment training and services on a regional basis takes place, it will be even more critical that standards of professionalism and competence do not vary on a region by region basis. VRS is logically positioned to address this issue around services delivered to the disabled that support sound vocational rehabilitation practice.

SECTION D

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section there are matters which upon review suggest a specific recommendation ought to be made. In other cases, no specific recommendations emerged from the review of issues, but rather than not comment at all, it seemed more appropriate and helpful to suggest the options that emerged.

For ease of reading the recommendations and where indicated the options, are noted with reference to the issue(s) from which they arose. Unless otherwise specified, Ministry refers to the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training.

1. **RECOMMENDATION:**

   That Ministry officials at the most senior levels confirm and reinforce the appropriateness and stability of the VRS program as part of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training, Job Training Branch. (Reference 1.3).

2. **RECOMMENDATION:**

   That Ministry officials continue with appropriate initiatives directed at integration of ministry programs, by selecting one or two specific examples, such as "employer-based training" and require a plan to be developed and announced as a combined initiative to meet Job Training Branch and VRS objectives. (Reference 2.1).

3. **RECOMMENDATION:**

   That senior Ministry officials delay integration of job functions within the Apprenticeship and VRS programs until the issue of a new role for VRS has been determined. (Reference 2.1).

4. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That a comprehensive review of vocational rehabilitation policy be completed by senior Ministry officials on as expeditious a basis as possible. (Reference 2.2).

5. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Ministry develop appropriate and active informal mechanisms of dialogue and consultation with all relevant external parties around ongoing policy development for vocational rehabilitation. (Reference 2.2).

6. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Ministry develop a communications program, utilizing individuals and written materials to enhance the broadest possible understanding of and compliance with Ministry policy. (Reference 2.2).

7. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Ministry officials designate VRS as the organizational component providing leadership around programs and services directed at meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of the disabled in British Columbia. (Reference 2.3).

8. **RECOMMENDATION:**

As an interim move, a small task group within the Ministry (no more than 3 persons) be created and mandated to carry out a very specific bridge building mission with agencies and organizations in the community, the first priority being to explain new Ministry programs, initiatives and directions to all interested parties. The small task group should be comprised of a VRS person and one or two others from different Ministry program areas. (Reference 3.1 and 3.2).

9. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That senior officials of the Ministry initiate and make arrangements to review with other provincial ministries, strategies to address co-ordination of all programs and services concerned with vocational rehabilitation of the disabled. (Reference 4.2).

10. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That senior officials of the Ministry consider making, at the earliest opportunity once operation has commenced, a proposal to the Premier's Advisory Council that the Council address the major issue of integration of all aspects of the provincial rehabilitative process of the disabled, including housing, transportation, recreation, education and employment. (Reference Section 4.1 and 4.2).

11. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That senior Ministry officials review and decide on the establishment of a broadly represented Provincial Steering Committee. It should include, but not necessarily be limited to, representatives from VRS, non-profit agencies, community colleges, employers, labour unions, and the Provincial Apprenticeship Training Board. It would also be appropriate to include representatives who are disabled, as well as represent community or agency organizations, professional associations and religious organizations. (Reference 6.2 and Section D).

12. **RECOMMENDATION:**

In line with recommendation 4, senior Ministry officials review how the policy development process integrates with the co-ordination role of the Provincial Co-ordinator. (Reference 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3).

13. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That upon completion of a review as noted in recommendation 12, the position of Provincial Co-ordinator be considered for revision, to reflect what in practice has become a financial and cost-sharing negotiation exercise on an annual basis but still be retained as a position and role, within the current Ministry. (Reference 6.3).

14. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That senior Ministry Officials adopt a plan, which when approved by Government will redirect VRS resources from the role of deliverers of services to the role of co-ordinators of services to be delivered through community agencies, colleges and individuals on contract. (Reference Section C).

15. **RECOMMENDATION:**

Flowing from recommendation 14, that senior Ministry officials reassign rehabilitation consultants to carry out the following responsibilities:

- policy co-ordination
- information and education
- evaluation and monitoring
- professional development/standards
- administration
  - program management
  - contract management
  - budget monitoring

(Reference Section C)

16. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That owing to government initiates around greater service delivery and autonomy on a regional basis, senior Ministry officials consider a maintenance group of rehabilitation consultants being assigned sole responsibility of reviewing and approving all requests for expenditures by agency organizations or individuals on contract. The objective is to maintain final decision making for vocational rehabilitation plans and costs within the Ministry. (Reference Section C).

17. **OPTION:**

That senior Ministry officials consider changing the program area name Vocational Rehabilitation Services to Vocational Rehabilitation Administrative and Advisory Services and further, consider changing the position title of rehabilitation consultant to Rehabilitation Advisory Services Officer. (Reference Section C).

18. **OPTION:**

That senior Ministry Officials create a new position called Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Services. (Reference 2.4).

19. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the current position of Co-ordinator Services to the Disabled be retained and report to the newly created position, Manager, Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Services. (Reference 2.4 and Section C).

20. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That senior Ministry officials establish a committee comprised of government and agency representation whose task is to prepare a proposal on the contents and requirements of a provincial standard of competence and expertise for those working in the area of vocational rehabilitation service to the disabled. (Reference Section C).

21. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That senior Ministry officials, once a professional standards proposal has been agreed upon, establish a Professional Standards Committee, comprised of government and community based representatives and, chaired by a VRS representative. (Reference Section C).

22. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Ministry officials consider entering into a contract with an independent professional with expertise in the field of technical aids. (Reference Section C, Part 5.0).

23. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That Ministry officials consider entering into a contract with an independent professional with expertise in the field of ergonomics or rehabilitation engineering. (Reference Section C, Part 5.0).

24. **OPTION:**

That senior Ministry officials re-visit the issue of need and appropriateness of a legislative framework for vocational rehabilitation programs in British Columbia. (Reference Section C, Part 1.0).

SECTION E

A TWO YEAR PLAN – THE TIMETABLE

A two-year time span in this review is considered the most appropriate for completing changes to the VRS program because: a) many recommendations as proposed would require time for planning and further time for re-organizational changes and implementation, and b) because two years is a span of time within which people and organizations can maintain a reasonable level of momentum.

The timetable is broken down into months or groups of months, within which planning, re-organization and implementation will occur – sometimes various activities occurring simultaneously. In addition, it is recognized other program areas of the Ministry are currently being changed or perhaps will be. The timetable for VRS changes may need to be modified, therefore, to meet needs arising elsewhere in the ministry.

Finally this timetable is at the macro level and is not intended as a step by step detailed progression of activities. Such decisions rest properly in the capable hands of Ministry Officials.

ACTIVITY	TIMETABLE
• Ministry completes review of policy issues	Oct./88 to Jan./89
• Ministry establishes small 2-3 person task group to liaise with community re: changes occurring in Ministry	Begin Oct./88
• Ministry develops plan for structuring an ongoing Vocational Rehabilitation Steering Committee (V.R.S.C.)	By Dec./88

ACTIVITY	TIMETABLE
• Ministry communicates plan to establish VRSC to community based organization and, Ministry invites names to be submitted	By Jan./89
• 1st meeting of VRSC	By Feb. 28/89
• Ministry makes decision on new manager position in time for 1989/90 budget cycle	By Feb. 28/89
• Ministry develops plan for changing role of VRS	– Process should begin following 1st meeting of VRSC – Should conclude by Dec./89
• Skills upgrading/re training of rehabilitation consultants around new roles	Begin Mar./89
• Ministry receives high-level political approval for new VRS role	By Mar. 31/89
• Changes to role of Provincial Co-ordinator	Before Dec./88
• Planning/development phase for new VRS role concludes - VRS commences operating in new role	By Dec./89
• Caseloads for VRS consultants discontinued	Before Sept./89 if possible
• Period for "pilot-testing"; fine-tuning new role and system for Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Services	During period Dec./89 to Sept./90

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW LIST

The following is a list of all the individuals interviewed during the course of the consultant's review of the VRS delivery system. In some cases, more than one interview with an individual was conducted. There were also instances where an individual was representing more than a single organization or group. The list is not presented in any particular order.

	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1.	Joan Berlow	B.C. Arthritis Society
2.	Richard Kucherka	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
3.	Glen Bautenheimer	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
4.	Isabel Kelly	Ministry of Advanced Education (April '88)
5.	Norman MacKenzie	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
6.	Bob Enwright	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
7.	Bruce Cline	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
8.	David Mitchell	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
9.	Alex Mirlin	Goodwill Industries (Victoria)
10.	Gwen Upton	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
11.	Rose Magnusson	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
12.	Gail Wilson	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
13.	Glen McDonald	G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre
14.	Ed Desjardins	G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre (Consultant)
15.	Elizabeth Hamilton	C.N.I.B.
16.	Michael Colussi	C.N.I.B.
17.	Shirley MacDonald	Private Rehabilitation Contractor
18.	Margaret Perry	Surrey Rehab
19.	Don Sugimoto*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training

NAME		ORGANIZATION
20.	Richard Little*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
21.	Gisela Theurer	Surrey Rehab
22.	Maureen Shaw	Province of Alberta
23.	Jim McFarlene	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
24.	Kerry Jothen	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
25.	Bob Barton*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
26.	Al Hoosan*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
27.	Sandy Bowell	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
28.	Norman Haw	Canadian Paraplegic Association
29.	Winston Lecky	ORW - Vancouver
30.	Shirley Romes	ORW - Richmond
31.	Rhys Popp	Mt. Pleasant Workshop
32.	Heather Schneid	ORW - Richmond
33.	Edith Fredrickson	ORW - Richmond
34.	Ed Devlin*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
35.	Harry Segal	V.G.H. Work Assessment Program
36.	Pat Roy*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
37.	Gail Thomas	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
38.	Rolf Fagerland	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
39.	Sharon Storey	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training (Contract)
40.	Lynn Seddaway	Western Institute for the Deaf
41.	Lee McDonald*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
42.	Ingrid Fischer	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
43.	Rick Warner*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
44.	Robin Laxton	B.C. Coalition of Disabled
45.	Lynn Mann	Headworks
46.	Dot Ewan	Vancouver Neurological Centre
47.	John Madison	B.C. Coalition of Disabled
48.	Angela Kwok	Vancouver Neurological Centre

	NAME	ORGANIZATION
49.	Gary Collie	B.C. Coalition of Disabled
50.	Calvin Shantz	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
51.	Ron Woodward	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
52.	Julie Brassington	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
53.	Don Hume	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training
54.	Colleen McParland	Private Contractor (Rehab)
55.	Peg Beaton	Vanc. Assoc. for Children/Adults with Learning Disabilities
56.	Allan Douglas*	Govt. of Alberta
57.	Stewart Cooke*	Govt. of Ontario
58.	Sharon Mathias	Govt. of Alberta
59.	Louise Folmer*	Ministry of Advanced Education/Job Training

Wednesday Sept. 7/88 - A presentation was made to the Community Review Committee. Attendees were:

Lucy Hanson	G.V.M.H.S.
Mike Colussi	C.N.I.B.
Norm Haw	C.P.A.
Glen McDonald	G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre
Lynn Seddaway	W.I.D.
Robin Laxton	Chairman
Peg Beaton	V.A.C.L.D.
Norah Cairns	Kinsmen Rehab
Jim Sanders	C.N.I.B.
Ed Desjardins	G.F. Strong Rehabilitation Centre
Jo Dickey	C.L.S.
Jackie Maniago	Family Link

* Means Telephone Interview

APPENDIX II

REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Provincial Vocational Rehabilitation Services and Programs in British Columbia: Interministry Advisors on Vocational Rehabilitation, Queens Printer, Feb. 1987, p.20.

2. Catalogue of Provincial Programs Cost-shared Through the Vocational Rehabilitation of Disabled Persons Agreement, Queens Printer 1987, p.1.

3. Obstacles: Report of the Special Committee on the Disabled and the Handicapped, Feb. 1981.

4. Challenges: Report of the British Columbia Committee for the International Year of Disabled Persons, 1981.

5. Beyond Bureaucracy: Mary Elizabeth Switzer and Rehabilitation, 1985.

APPENDIX III

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

I would like to acknowledge my appreciation for the honest, intelligent and articulate input and level of co-operation provided me during the course of this review.

From those interviewed, I have received not only the benefit of their individual and collective knowledge – but also have been inspired by their dedication.

I would also be remiss were I not to acknowledge with special thanks the assistance and complete co-operation of the staff of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Job Training and in particular, Mrs. Julie Brassington, who by her anticipating of needs and action made it infinitely easier to access people and information needed in carrying out this review.